

UDOT urges I-15 CORE drivers to be careful as construction continues

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By Sam Penrod

UTAH COUNTY -- More dramatic changes are on the way to Interstate 15 in Utah County. A project set to begin Monday comes in addition to several changes made earlier in the week, and drivers have to make some changes.

The I-15 CORE project in Utah County has reached a point where the entire 24 mile stretch is now an active construction zone. Lanes have shifted and are narrower; on-and off-ramps are much shorter.

This week saw a lane switch between University Parkway and Provo Center Street. It also saw the arrival of a 55 mile per hour speed limit through the entire construction zone.

Patricia Call commutes through most of the construction zone every day. She calls driving on the on-ramp in Springville "terrifying." It's narrow, with a jersey barrier that pushes drivers quickly into the lane.

"There is no room to get up to speed' and if someone slows down and stops because they are timid, then we've got a problem, because then there's no way to get up to speed without somebody having to slam on their brakes," Call says.

The Utah Department of Transportation acknowledges the changes are not what drivers are use to. Officials say in an effort to keep the same number of lanes open during the project, construction crews can't maintain the freeway as it was and drivers really need to drive more cautiously.

"What we need people to do, not only the driver's to merge quickly, but also the drivers who are on I-15 to move over and allow those who are getting onto the freeway to merge quickly," says Heather Barnam, spokeswoman for the I-15 CORE project.

Barnam points to several accidents over the past couple of weeks where drivers were speeding as examples of why people must drive differently in this long-running construction zone.

"This area of 24 miles is actively under construction and we need people to be courteous and to be safe and to be paying attention to the reduced speeds we have in place," Barnam says.

The next change will come next week: a lane switch for both directions of traffic. It will begin at Provo Center Street and run south to Springville.

UDOT still expects the freeway will be completely finished in December of 2012, just a little more than two years from now.

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